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Joseph Kraft

# Putting Defense On the Defensive

The defense consensus that the Reagan administration enjoyed when it took office is suddenly beginning to fall apart. Not just because of budgetary pressure, and still less because of the anti-nuclear movement.

The true challenge is posed by defense specialists in Congress who sense a gap between the strategy enunciated by Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and the force structure the Pentagon plans to build in the next five years. Addressing that problem has become a top priority for the White House, and especially for Tom Reed, a former Air Force secretary who has come to play a central role as a temporary consultant to the National Security Council.

Budget stringency is, of course, a fact of life. The \$215 billion in total outlays requested for military spending in fiscal 1983 is sure to be cut. But probably not by much. Indeed, some leading critics of the Reagan defense program have not yet accepted the need to chop at all.

The anti-nuclear movement is plainly gathering force on the campuses and in the press and television. But officials here believe they can demonstrate the proposal for an early freeze on nuclear weapons is bad—even for arms control. They claim it would undermine the present round of talks with Russia in Geneva aimed at cutting back medium-range nuclear weapons based in Europe. They also say they can top a freeze with proposals for reductions in intercontinental missiles when talks on that subject begin with Russia this summer.

Far more difficult to handle is the line of questioning opened by Sen. Sam Nunn, the Georgia Democrat, and his allies on the Armed Services Committee. The starting point is the strategy laid out by Weinberger in the annual defense posture statement. The emphasis there is on a "global" approach that features the need to fight simultaneously, and perhaps for an extended period, in many areas—not only Europe, but also the Middle East, the Caribbean and Korea. An estimate of what it would take to fund such an effort was made by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and it came to about \$750 billion more than the \$1.6 trillion requested for the 1982-1986 period.

Weinberger dismissed the estimate as a "wish list," and his deputy, Frank Carlucci, said that when it was

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sented, "We spent all of 30 seconds on it." But various military men have been far less casual.

Edward C. Meyer, the Army chief of staff, said of the document on costs: "I don't consider it a wish list, if you believe the defense of the nation is important." In response to a question as to the meaning of the gap between the ambitious "global" strategy and the huge expenditures, Meyer said: "I think the message that comes from the gap is that we are accepting tremendous risks with the size of the force that we currently have to do what we have pledged to do."

The implications of that line of attack are devastating. It is bipartisan in character, and includes strong military support. It makes the Reagan administration appear to be just what it said about the Carter administration on defense—not serious.

The White House has finally become aware of the problem. William Clark, the president's new national security adviser, overcame political resistance to bring former Air Force secretary Reed on to his staff as a consultant. Reed has completed 60 days' service, and is beginning another 30-day stint. He has been in all the top White House offices—including that of the president, whom he knows from way, way back.

His first major task is the preparation of National Security Study Directive Number 1—a paper that will attempt to harmonize strategy and force structure with the budget. The hope is that an authoritative document, bearing the presidential stamp, will make it possible for the whole defense community, including Democrats and military men, to regroup around the president.

But Reed understands that to achieve that goal he will have to stop the Pentagon from ignoring the implications of decisions the president has made. He hopes to force out an explicit recognition that a "global" strategy requires allies and novel ways to meet conventional attacks, and credible proposals on arms control.

Above all, he hopes to break the bureaucratic habit of delaying response. "I have the reputation," Reed said recently, "of being prepared to entertain any idea, however farfetched it may seem to me. But when I'm working for the president I want to entertain it in a timely way—say Monday at 9:30 in the morning."

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